Ministers and State Chief Ministers, besides the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, was constituted to look into various aspects of Food Management and Agricultural Exports. The matter was further discussed with the States in the 1st and 4th meeting of the Committee on 6.7.2001 and 23.4.2002 respectively. The Union Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution also convened meetings with the Food Secretaries/representatives of the State Governments of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal to discuss the scheme of Decentralised procurement. In the First meeting of the Standing Committee held on 6.7.2001, it was clarified to the States that the procurement of foodgrains would not be imposed on any State, against their wishes. The present arrangement of procurement of foodgrains would continue where States are not yet prepared to shift to a decentralized system of procurement.

New Consumer Protection Act

4560. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to have a new Consumer Protection Act;

(b) if so, whether the provisions of this Act shall apply to all the claims except in respect of which corresponding remedies of judicial nature are available;

(c) if so, what are its main features;

(d) to what extent, this Consumer Protection Act would be useful; and

(e) by when a final decision is likely to be taken for introducing the proposed legislation in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (e) No, Sir. However, a Bill to amend

the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 26.4.2001. The Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha as the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2002 on 11.3.2002. The Bill, as passed by the Rajya Sabha, was laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha on 15.3.2002.

Demand of actual transportation charges

4561. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Gujarat has respresented to the Union Government for allowing actual road transportation charges in respect of lifting of levy sugar price equalisation fund scheme.

(b) If so, whether Government are considering the proposal; and

(c) If not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government of Gujarat represented to the Central Government regarding reimbursement of actual road transportation charges. The State Government has been informed, *inter alia,* that Central Government has revised the margin guidelines on 4.11.96 and, as per these guidelines, the transportation charges with effect from 1.4.96 are being reimbursed at a flat rate for each state to be fixed on the basis of audited figures of expenditure duly approved by the State Government concerned for previous year.

Cases pending before district forum in Pondicherry

4562. SHRI CP. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases pending before the District Forum and the State Commission in the Union territory of Pondicherry;